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THOUGHTS
CONCERNING THE
SAFETY and EXPEDIENCY
Of granting RELIEF in the
MATTER of SUBSCRIPTION
TO THE
CLERGY of the CHURCH of *ENGLAND*.



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THOUGHTS

CONCERNING THE
SAFETY and EXPEDIENCY

Of granting RELIEF in the
MATTER of SUBSCRIPTION

TO THE
CLERGY of the CHURCH of *ENGLAND*,

OCCASIONED BY

The Rev. Mr. WOLLASTON's Address to them.

By RICHARD TILLARD, *A.M.*

Vicar of South Leverton, Nottinghamshire.

EVERY ONE OF US SHALL GIVE ACCOUNT OF HIM-
SELF TO GOD. LET US NOT THEREFORE JUDGE
ONE ANOTHER ANY MORE; BUT JUDGE THIS RA-
THER, THAT NO MAN PUT A STUMBLING BLOCK,
OR AN OCCASION TO FALL IN HIS BROTHER'S
WAY.

ROM. xiv. 12, 13.

L O N D O N:

Printed for R. HORSFIELD, No. 22, Ludgate-Street.

MDCCLXXIII.

T H O U G H T S

CONCERNING THE

SAFETY AND EXPEDIENCE

OF GIVING RATES IN THE

MATTER OF SUBSCRIPTION

TO THE

CLERGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

EXCITED BY

THE REV. MR. WOLLASTON'S ADDRESS TO THEM

BY RICHARD TILLARD, A.M.

OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND OF THE

THEY ONE OF US SHALL GIVE A COUNTRY OF THE
TO GOD. LET US NOT THEREFORE IN THE
ONE ANOTHER ANY MORE; BUT LET US THIS DAY
THAT NO MAN PUT A stumbling block
OR AN OCCASION TO FALL IN THE WAY OF
BROTHER.

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L. O. 15/10
Printed for R. Henshaw, No. 21, Finsbury Street.
MDCCXXXII.

THOUGHTS

CONCERNING

The Safety and Expediency of granting RELIEF in the Matter of SUBSCRIPTION to the CLERGY of the CHURCH of ENGLAND.

WHEN a Man presumes to address his Sentiments to the Public upon a Subject of Importance, to assign his Reasons for his Conduct seems a Deference justly due to them. Before I enter upon my Subject therefore, I shall explain the Motives which incited me to this Attempt; and as they seem to me to be perfectly justifiable, I hope they will appear to others in so favourable a Light as to induce them, on this Account, to judge with Candour, and to make greater Allowances for any Deficiency in the Performance itself.

In the first Place then, a sincere Desire to promote the Cause of Truth and of Religion,

gion, and to lend what little Assistance is in my Power to remove the generally, and indeed almost universally, acknowledged Blemishes in our establish'd Ecclesiastical System, was the first and principal Motive.

Another was, that there seems to be now some Prospect that Redress will be obtained, and that a more simple, comprehensive, and perfect Form of Doctrine will be adopted; by which Means it is to be hoped that, through the Blessing of God upon our well-meant Endeavours, a further Reformation, both in Faith and Practice, may be effected.

An additional Motive was, that at a Time like the present, when Things of such Consequence are in serious Agitation, I look upon it to be the Duty of every one to bear his Testimony on the one Side or on the other, only remembering to keep within the Bounds of Temper and Moderation, and of just Deference to his Superiors. And more particularly this seemed a proper Season for doing it, when the Clergy of this Kingdom are called upon and invited, by a late Publication of a Gentleman for whom I have a respectful Regard, to concur in a Design so proper, so laudable, and so well concerted,

concerted, and to which I most sincerely wish Success, as that proposed by my Friend Mr. *Wollaston*.

Another Inducement was, that though I have not the Vanity to imagine I shall be able to offer any Thing of great Importance upon the Occasion, yet sometimes a Hint from a Person of inferior Abilities has furnished a Subject of Consideration to those of superior Talents, from whose Labours the World has derived signal and permanent Advantages. Add to this, that Curiosity frequently leads Men to look over the Performances of their Acquaintance. From this Reason perhaps some Persons may chance to peruse this Pamphlet, who possibly may never see Mr. *Wollaston's*; and by this Means it may be more universally known that such a Design is in Agitation. If I can induce only one single Person to approve and encourage it, I shall think myself well rewarded for the Trouble.

To enter now upon the Subject: There has of late Years gone forth, and has been gradually increasing, a Spirit of free Enquiry into the Nature and Principles of every Science; and in such an Age it would

have been strange indeed, if Religion, a Subject of the greatest Importance to Mankind, and in which, of all others, they are most nearly and essentially concern'd, had not been consider'd and discuss'd.

In considering this Subject, as new Lights have been thrown upon it, and a more liberal and enlarg'd Turn of Mind have prevailed, many have thought themselves aggriev'd by being obliged to subscribe to any Articles of Religion whatever, composed by any Man or Set of Men. Many more, not extending their Desires of Liberty so far, have yet wish'd for an Alteration and Amendment of those which they are now by Law obliged to subscribe and declare their Assent to. With respect to the former, they strongly contend that no Man or Body of Men have any Kind of Right to demand and enforce their Subscription and Assent to any Propositions whatever, unless to the Scriptures themselves, or to Propositions taken from Scripture, in the Terms of Scripture itself.

It appears to me to be unnecessary to enter upon the Discussion of this Right, as it would be useless and unavailing; for
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there is not the most distant Reason to imagine that such a Claim as this will, in the present Circumstances, be admitted and allow'd of. I shall therefore wave entering into any Consideration of it; but as I hope it may in some Measure contribute to calm the Minds of the few into whose Hands these Sheets may fall, and free them from the Alarm which has been given of the dreadful Dangers that would ensue, from the Scriptures being made the only Test to which we should subscribe, I shall a little consider the Consequences that would probably result from it. We have been told that, if this Latitude were to be allow'd, we should have all the ancient Sects and Heresies reviv'd, and even religious Wars (of all others the most dreadful and destructive) kindled amongst us; but from these pernicious Effects, the Knowledge, the Refinement, the Civilization, nay, even the Dissipation and Depravity of the Age we live in, as far as Human Foresight can discover, would deliver and exempt us, for there seems to be too much Disregard to Religion in general, to suffer Men to embroil themselves, in order to maintain and support any particular Mode of it. But what Occasion is there to argue from what
would

would *probably* happen, when we can argue from Facts and from *actual*, visible, daily Experience? Is there not at present subsisting among us a Variety of different Sects, whose Opinions are as directly opposite as Light and Darkness? Are not these several Sects, if not legally yet actually tolerated in worshipping God according to their own Consciences, and teaching such Doctrines as they think agreeable to Scripture? Are not the *Papists*, Enemies to the Protestant Religion, conniv'd at by our Governors? Have not the *Jews*, Enemies to Christianity itself, an allow'd Place of public Worship and Instruction? *Have* those terrible Effects, we are taught to apprehend, resulted from this Variety of Sects and Opinions? If they have not, what Room is there for Apprehension that they will arise? If the Experience of near a Century has shewn that they have not arisen, why then should we continue to alarm ourselves with such groundless Imaginations? In *Holland* I believe the Toleration is even more compleat than in *England*, and, if possible, a greater Diversity of religious Opinions prevails there, and yet we read and hear of no such Bitterness, Animosity, and Rage as it is prophesied we in like Circumstances should

should fall into. If the Cause of this be
 inquired into, why so many various Sects
 can live together in Peace and Quietness?
 the Answer seems plain and obvious; it is
 to be ascrib'd to this, that all of them are in
 Fact tolerated, and none of them have so
 little Charity or so little Sense as to anathe-
 matize and devote to Damnation others for
 differing from them in Opinion. Persecute
 any Sect, and you will encrease the Number
 of its Votaries, and inflame them with a
 Spirit of Rancour and Revenge, and a De-
 sire of retaliating the Injuries they receive
 from you. Let any one examine Ecclesia-
 stical History, and he will find that *all* the
 Mischief with which it has so fruitfully
 teem'd, has flow'd from this Source, *the*
Want of Christian Charity and Forbear-
ance; and if Time, and a greater Degree of
 Knowledge and Refinement, has in some
 Measure subdu'd *this evil Disposition, so re-*
pugnant to the true and genuine Spirit of
Christianity, we may hope, by the Blessing
 of God, that at length it may be wholly
 and perfectly eradicated; and this Happi-
 ness once obtained, we may venture to pro-
 phesy the gradual Removal of all those
 Errors which now obscure and disgrace the
 Christian Religion. Such *will* be, such
must

must be the Consequence of Freedom of Enquiry. Truth will at last, in God's appointed Time, prevail over Error; but if we oppose or neglect the Means by which this desirable End may be accomplish'd, are we Friends of Truth, or Workers together with God?

So much it seem'd necessary to say to obviate, as far as I could, those groundless Apprehensions of imaginary Dangers, which it is supposed would arise, if absolute and perfect Freedom were allow'd to every one of teaching such Doctrines as appear'd to him to be agreeable to Scripture, without being tied down to consider whether they were conformable to any Set of Propositions deduced from Scripture by the Interpretation of others. But what shall we say if this really be the Case at present, if it has been so for a considerable Length of Time, and indeed must be so in Spite of all that can be done to prevent it, unless the State should perpetually keep in Pay a Set of Ecclesiastical Informers, or could immediately enlighten all our Congregations with Knowledge sufficient to understand the present Articles, and to judge when a Point of Doctrine is treated of in a
Manner

Manner perfectly consonant with them. To do this would be a Miracle little inferior to any that ever was wrought. But here I am aware of an Objection which may be made; some one perhaps, animated with great Zeal and Displeasure, may cry out, What, Sir, do you suppose any one can be guilty of so unpardonable a Fault as to subscribe to one Form of Doctrine and teach another? To this I reply, That I have frequently heard Doctrines delivered from the Pulpit, and more than once by Persons who now fill high Stations in the Church, which were *more than not perfectly conformable to some of the Articles*: What has been, may again be, and I think it probably does happen every *Sunday* throughout the Year. I urge this only as an Argument that no such Danger would arise from different Opinions being publicly taught, as we are led to imagine: But if this Argument should by any be thought to want still further Confirmation, it will receive it from the Practice of a large and respectable Body of the Dissenters, I mean that Part of them who by some, in the Way of Derision, by others, and I think with greater Justice, by Way of Commendation, are called *Rational Dissenters*: Among this Set of Men, *no Test, no*

Subscription, no Profession of Faith is requir'd; and yet what Mischief have we heard of or found resulting from it? The Objection arising from the *Danger* being, I hope, satisfactorily answer'd, I will now just touch upon the *Fact* with respect to the primitive Christians. My little Reading in Ecclesiastical History has not furnish'd me with the Knowledge of any Creed or Formula of Faith before that of *Ignatius* in his Epistle to the *Trallians*. He flourish'd in the Year 105, if there be any of an earlier Date I shall be very ready, upon better Information, to acknowledge and retract my Error. As to the Passage which the Dean of *Gloucester* has quoted from *St. Jude*, as a *Command of Scripture which plainly refers to some Compendium of the Gospel, that is to some particular Creed or Confession of Faith, whatever it was, which was once delivered to the Saints*, I agree with him that it does, and I think this Compendium is to be found in the very next Verse, viz. that instead of denying, as those wicked Men he mentions had done, we should *confess* the ONLY LORD GOD AND OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST; and this seems likewise to have been the Creed deliver'd by the Apostles, *Thou art the CHRIST the Son of*

of

of the living God, says St. Peter. Mat. xvi. 16. What shall I do to be saved, says the Jailor to Paul: Believe on the LORD JESUS CHRIST, and thou shalt be saved and thy House. Acts xvi. 30, 31. These seem to be the Compendiums of the Gospel delivered by the Apostles themselves; and to these, or any others, *positively and explicitly* to be found in their Writings, *no one*, I imagine, would refuse at any Time, if call'd upon, to give his Assent. But since, for various Reasons operating on the different Classes of Mankind, it is not perhaps to be expected that Tests so simple and so plain as these will now be admitted as sufficient Criteria of a Clergyman's Christianity, yet the Temper of the Times (which, notwithstanding all that has been said, and all that may daily be observ'd, concerning the Innocence of a Variety of religious Opinions, would not, as may be conjectur'd from some late Events, allow of too hasty or too great a Simplification of religious Doctrine) seems, however, favourable enough to an Improvement of a Reformation, which does great Honour to the Times in which it was accomplish'd, but was not in those Days, even by the Authors of it, look'd upon as a perfect System either of Doctrine, Worship, or Discipline.

Since that Time Improvements have been made in every Branch of Learning, and great Light, by the Labours of many able Critics and learned Divines, both of our own and other Countries, has been thrown upon Religion: Why then should we still inflexibly adhere to the System of a less enlightened Age? Some of our Brethren stepp'd forward last Year, and applied to the Legislature for Redress. Their Endeavours were fruitless, because they aim'd at (I will not say) more than what was *right*, but more than there was any great Probability of obtaining. There is Room to imagine that there are *many, many more* who would wish for an *Improvement* and *Amendment* both of our Articles and our Liturgy; some who have attain'd to Eminence in the Church, and have stood forth in its Defence, have acknowledg'd the Expediency, nay, I hope I shall be excused if I say, have prov'd the *Necessity* of it; this, I think, has been clearly done, to the Satisfaction of every candid Mind, by Dr. *Tucker* in his *Apology for the Church of England*.

Those therefore who are convinc'd of the Expediency, of the Necessity of such a Measure, would do well to shew their
 Conviction

Conviction by bearing a public Testimony to it, and joining in the Application, propos'd by Mr. *Wollaston*, to the Bench of Bishops, *who*, as he says, *cannot but see, and do indeed acknowledge, the Propriety of an Amendment*. Let us not then, by our Backwardness or Indifference, contribute to defeat so good a Design; but let us, on the contrary, do every thing in our Power to promote it, by expressing, in a proper and respectful Manner, our Concurrence with it, and our sincere Desires that it may be happily accomplish'd. If there be any who may chance to peruse this, that have not before fully considered the Subject, to them, with Deference, I submit the following Arguments upon the Occasion, which *to me*, to another perhaps they may not, appear satisfactory.

If the present *Mode* of Subscription be unexceptionable; if the Doctrine contained in the present Articles be in every Part of it perfectly intelligible and strictly defensible; if the Liturgy be so perfect as to be incapable of any Improvement, whence has it happen'd that not a single Person, so far as I know, has stood forth to vindicate them in this *full and ample Manner*, and to
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prove this Perfection in them? Is there not one Member of the Church who has Learning and Abilities sufficient to do this, and a proper Degree of Zeal to induce him to be her Defender? If there be not this Perfection, nay, more, if her ablest Advocates have either tacitly or openly acknowledged *some few Blemishes* in her, it is a Duty incumbent upon every one to contribute, to the utmost of his Power, to the Removal of them; for though in most Cases I agree with Dr. *Tucker* in thinking, *Non ego paucis offendar Maculis*, to be a good Rule, yet in Religion I cannot think it so, for from that I would, if possible, remove the *very smallest Blemish*, and endeavour to render it, and to deliver it, as pure as it came down from the Author of Light and Truth, and by that Means to impress upon the Minds of Men a Religion worthy of being attributed to the Divine Original from whence it sprung.

Another Argument, which makes me earnestly wish to see and to promote an Alteration, is this: It has been frequently objected to the Clergy of the Church of *England* that they subscribe and profess to give their Assent to Articles which yet they do
not

not and cannot really believe ; if this Charge be injurious, it certainly is incumbent upon us clearly and uncontrovertibly, *if it can be done*, to prove its Falsehood ; if it be justly founded, it is then become an *absolutely indispensable Duty* to alter and amend them in such a Manner that we may, *with undissembling Sincerity and perfect Truth*, be able to give our Assent to them, since there are few Things which will be of more real Disservice to the Cause of true Religion than an Opinion of any Insincerity in the Teachers of it : To this Cause, I apprehend, may be attributed the great Increase of Infidelity in those Countries which still remain under the Dominion of Popery ; those amongst them who have too much Sense to believe all the Tales of Priestcraft which prevail there, and who cannot persuade themselves that the Religion they see is worthy of an all-wise and gracious Being, condemn and reject, without further Examination, Christianity itself ; thus too will it be, I am afraid I may say, thus *it is* with us : If an Opinion of our Insincerity, in so serious and important a Concern, prevail, the Consequence must necessarily be that Men will be at least indisposed to believe what we say to them, to reject our Instructions, and to condemn our Conduct.

If such be the Consequences, it is to be presum'd that every Friend to true Religion will willingly contribute his Assistance to the Removal of this *Stumbling Block*, as Mr. *Wollaston* justly terms it.

If any further Inducement could be wanting to excite a Desire to promote the Alteration and Improvement of our Articles and Liturgy, it might be drawn from hence, that by rendering more simple, and more comprehensive, our Terms of Communion, and our Form of public Worship, many might be induced to join us who now forbear to do it through conscientious Motives; and by this Means we might acquire many worthy and useful Members, who may possibly become future Lights and Ornaments of the Church.

These Arguments seem to me sufficiently convincing (and I hope they will appear so to many others) to incite me to concur with, and endeavour to promote, the Design propos'd by Mr. *Wollaston*, of making a respectful Application to the Bench of Bishops for their Assistance in procuring such Alterations as may be judg'd proper and expedient; and though I agree with
him,

him that it is not for me to dictate what shall be the Form of the Proposal, or the Particulars of the Address, yet I hope it will not appear assuming, if I express a Wish that it may be as *simple and comprehensive as possible*, as I think by this Means it will be much more likely to give Offence to none, to prevent Cavils and Objections being rais'd against it, and to be adopted by so many of our Brethren as may add Weight and Consequence to it when it comes to be presented to the Consideration of our Superiors; and it is to be hop'd, and I think there is great Reason to imagine, that if an Alteration be made, *they* will likewise adopt a Plan by which the *Terms of Communion* may be render'd as *simple and comprehensive* as possible, since their Knowledge of Ecclesiastical History cannot but remind them that *all the Mischiefs the Church of CHRIST ever knew, all the Corruptions of his Divine Religion*, arose from Men's attempting to determine and to decide Points which our blessed Master, and those who immediately deriv'd their Commission from him, had left *undetermin'd and undecided*, and when they had thus *rashly and presumptuously* decided upon them, making them *necessary* Terms of Christian Communion, and *impiously da-*

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ring to devote to Damnation those who differ'd from them in Opinion; I call it impiously, because it is a direct, manifest, flagrant Violation of that great Command, which our blessed LORD thought fit to establish as the *distinguishing Mark, the Test* of our belonging to him, namely, Christian Love and Charity, *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love one to another,* John xiii. 35. Let us all therefore endeavour upon every Occasion, and *particularly upon the present,* to cherish in our Bosoms this Divine Love, *with which it is to be hop'd there are few, if any,* Errors in Opinion that will endanger our everlasting Happiness, and *without which* St. Paul expressly tells us, that though we understood all Mysteries, and had all Knowledge, and Faith so that we could remove Mountains, *we are nothing.*

Before I conclude; lest any one should be led to form a wrong Judgment of me, founded upon any Thing in the former Part of this Pamphlet which may appear too free, I think it incumbent upon me to declare, that though *to me* there does not appear any Danger to be apprehended from Subscription to the Scriptures *alone,* yet it

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is with Deference that I submit this Opinion to Men of maturer and wiser Judgments. With respect to the Liturgy, I have an high Admiration of, and sincere Veneration for it, as a *very excellent Composition*, simple, plain, and unaffected, strong, nervous, and pathetic; and for this Reason I cannot suppress my humble yet ardent Wishes, that the *exceptionable* Parts of it were remov'd; and the less acceptable Phrases were alter'd and improv'd, so that sincere Christians, however differing in speculative Points, might join in the Use of it with a good Conscience and true Devotion: This done, perhaps it will readily be allowed that it would want little of that Perfection any Human Composition is capable of, and might gradually be a Means of lessening, if not of removing from among us all Differences in Sentiment and Opinion.

And now, my Brethren, permit me to conclude with my earnest Entreaties that those among you, who think an Alteration necessary, will at this Time stand forth, and join in the proposed Application to the Bench of Bishops to procure us Redress. But whatever may be the Success of this Request, you will all no Doubt unite in

this Prayer which I offer up to Almighty God, That he would be pleased to give us Grace faithfully to consider, and truly to understand those Things which belong to our Happiness, and firmly and resolutely to practise what we so understand; that he would instruct us in his eternal Truth, and enable us every Day to obtain better and more perfect Notions of his divine Nature and Attributes, in which the Fulness of all our Happiness consists; and lastly, that he would unite us all in the strongest Bands of FRIENDSHIP, PEACE, and CONCORD, thro' JESUS CHRIST our Lord. Amen.

And now, my Brethren, permit me to conclude with my earnest desires that those among you, who think my Address necessary, will at the Time and Place, and join in the proposed Application to the Bench of Bishops to procure a Relief. But whatever may be the Success of this Request, you will all no Doubt unite in

